

2nd DRAFT

7 February 1957

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PARAMILITARY STAFF STUDY

SUBJECT: The Use of Balloons in CIA Operations

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to determine the future operational potential of balloon operations by DD/P elements. Staff recommendations will be found in section IX b.
- II. **TECHNICAL POTENTIAL:** In the past year and a half, CIA has developed a very realistic ballooning potential. The various balloon systems that are proven to be operationally feasible and now available should be given due consideration by the Clandestine Services. Guidance from field experience to the Technical Services Staff's research and development program has been invaluable in improving and perfecting new equipment, tactics and techniques. A combination of better equipment and techniques in conjunction with increased emphasis on proper training of staff personnel has eliminated the majority of the uncertainties of balloon operations. Technical details: range, payload, cost and condensed operational information are included in Tab A. However, the general classifications of existing CIA balloon capabilities are:

a.

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ORIG COMP	056	ORIG	576	TYPE	30
ORIG CLASS	3	PAGES	16	REV CLASS	C
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- b. Propaganda or cargo balloons - CIA has the capability of free ballooning a payload of leaflets varying



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- c. Special mission balloons - Manned or free flight balloons are applicable to special missions but require varying degrees of modifications of existing CIA systems.


The experience accumulated from past operations, research and development, and the extensive tests related thereto has made available to the Clandestine Services a very effective balloon capability.

**III. BALLOON TRAINING OF CIA PERSONNEL:** Successful balloon operations,



propaganda, require trained, experienced personnel

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in planning and execution. There is a dire lack of qualified balloonists in CIA. To date  staff employees have been trained in:

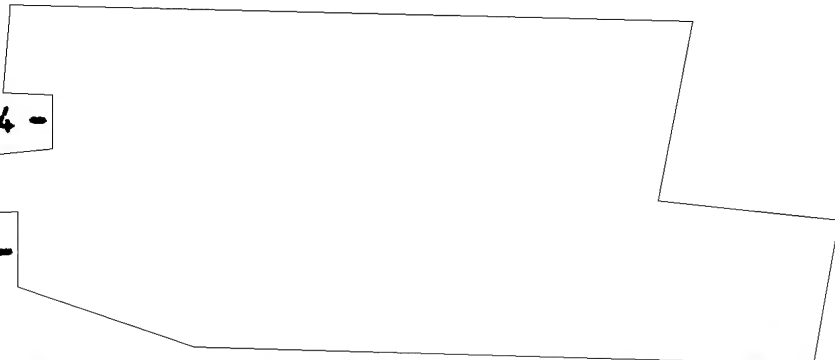
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March 1953 -

February 1954 -

June 1955 -

August 1956 -



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OTR officially assumed balloon training in 1955 and at that time included the Balloon Operations course in their curriculum. In view of the recent developments in equipment and tactics and techniques the majority of the above personnel cannot be considered

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current and up to date in their training. Even so, only a very few of these are currently available for participation in balloon projects. The Area Divisions are reluctant to release individuals for four to five weeks for balloon training, particularly since ballooning, as such, cannot be considered a full time assignment in any division. Scheduling and selection of students also presents difficulties as only one course per year has been conducted since 1953.

IV. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BALLOON OPERATIONS:

a. Advantages:

1. Policy has, in the past, permitted lighter-than-air overflights when heavier-than-air overflights have been prohibited; 25X1

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3. Radar detection - Unless the balloons are carrying metal operational equipment they are not detectable by radar.

4. Balloons are silent and also difficult to see by personnel on the ground.

5. Balloons are less hazardous from the standpoint of loss of personnel and the loss of more expensive equipment (aircraft).

b. Disadvantages:

1. Balloon operations are not conducive to short range planning and implementation but require advanced and detailed planning in both the operational aspects as well as logistical support. This fact should not actually be considered a disadvantage but unfortunately, lack of advanced detailed planning has contributed to inefficient balloon operations in the past.

2. Balloon operations, because of their technical nature, require fully trained personnel both in planning and execution. A qualified balloonist, staff or indigenous, can easily train other personnel for the various launching duties and also conduct agent training wherein personnel are to be infiltrated. It is essential that trained and experienced staff personnel, where applicable, be made responsible for balloon operations.

3. Balloon operations are directly dependent upon wind velocities and direction, either seasonal or year round. However, weather studies are available through PP/AMD to cover any proposed launching site and the desired target areas. The expected "percentage of frequencies" as indicated by the initial weather studies dictates whether a balloon project should even be considered. As a follow-up, timely, accurate weather support is essential during the entire launching season. However, proper operational weather support, through the USAF

Air Weather Service or other services, can be considered available globally.

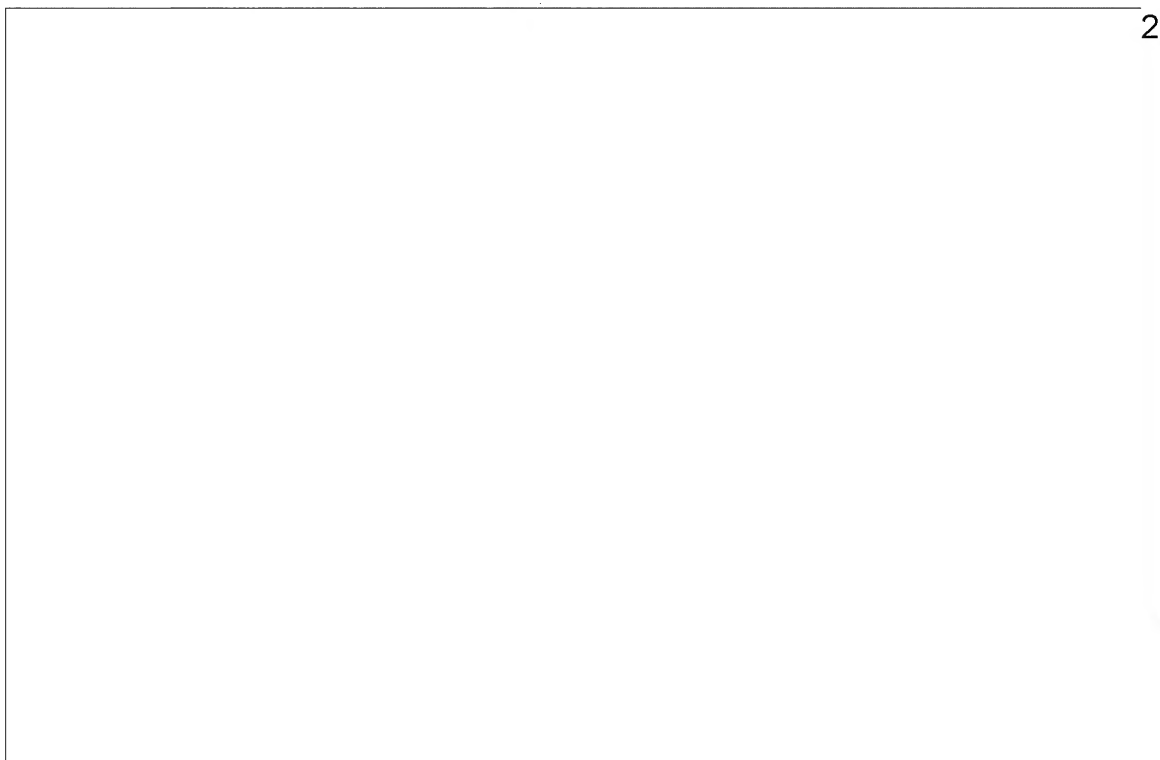
4. Ballooning does not permit selection of audiences for the propaganda product.

5. There is no controlled method of observing the effect of propaganda introduced via ballooning.

6. There is an unpredictable percentage of waste of propaganda material connected with ballooning. The percentage of leaflets not recovered due to falling into unpopulated areas, mountainous regions, rivers and lakes will vary on each project.

V. AVAILABLE ASSETS:

a. Current Active Operations:



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**VIII. PRESENT U.S. POLICY ON BALLOON OPERATIONS:**

a. Present U. S. policy, as enunciated by the Department of State and agreed to by CIA, places the following limitations on balloon operations:

1. Leaflet drops from balloons into the USSR are forbidden.

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7. Leaflets must conform to the policy lines prescribed by the Department of State and furnished to CIA. The Agency is not obligated to let State review the texts of all leaflets before they are used, especially those produced abroad, but should do so in the interest of harmony as often as convenient. Sample copies of all leaflets will be forwarded to State after they have been dropped.

b. A further review of policy is considered likely in the near future in that the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is expected by the Department of



State to rule that balloon operations are a hazard to air safety and a violation of the air sovereignty of the target countries. A Clandestine Services consideration in this respect is the possibility that CIA might be asked to cease all balloon operations in the European area as a result of the anticipated ICAO ruling. It is the position of this Staff that CIA should not accept restrictions on clandestine operations when such restrictions are posed on national sovereignty considerations since the reason for having Clandestine Services activity is to go around such factors. Rather the Clandestine Services should revise its ballooning operations so as to further incorporate the principle of plausible denial. The more serious problem would be the effect which continued ballooning might have on our relations with the government of a given country from which we would want to balloon after a negative ICAO decision has been reached.

- c. CIA headquarters is currently in receipt of a proposed operational concept for Strategic Psychological Warfare in Europe from the U. S. European Command. This concept assigns to CIA the responsibility for all hot war balloon launchings in the European area and the responsibility for balloon operations that are designed as part of the Strategic Psychological Warfare program in wartime.

EUCOM desires that balloon operations be continued to the maximum extent consistent with resources and conditions existing during hostilities. Should this concept be agreed upon, CIA must be prepared to accept the responsibility with qualified personnel and even more highly developed balloon systems.

IX. A. CONCLUSIONS:

1. The reviewing officers concluded that, subject to policy and political considerations, balloon operations have proven themselves as a method of propaganda distribution. The use of balloons in itself has a psychological impact upon the security forces of the target area which must be considered as a product of these operations.

2. Ballooning to date has been primarily in the fields of white and grey propaganda. CIA has the technical capability to distribute black propaganda as well by this means.

3. The advisability of using balloons for the distribution of propaganda must be determined in relation to the capability of reaching the target audience by other means such as radio, overflights, winddrift, and rockets.

4. It is probable that CIA will be forced to discontinue the use of balloons for the distribution of white and grey propaganda in Europe. This fact should not, however, be allowed to affect the potential for using balloons for black propaganda in that area.

**B. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. It is recommended that the Area Divisions and the Clandestine Services remain alert to the CIA balloon potential even though there may be no eminent operations.

2. That each Area Division (except WH) schedule at least one headquarters staff employee for the Balloon Operations course (one scheduled to begin 11 March 1957).

It is also highly desirable that a few personnel scheduled for the field be given this training. In respect to this training, individual will probably never be utilized on a full time basis in connection with balloon operations either in headquarters or in the field. The training is merely to provide the Divisions with their own knowledgeable individuals capable of advising their respective chiefs in the preliminary stages.

3. That SR, SE, EE and FE Divisions fully explore the possibilities of distribution of black propaganda via ballooning.

4. That in any discussions with the Department of State concerning balloon leaflet operations, black propaganda be handled as a separate matter, compartmented for operational security from the principles of content review presently established for white and grey propaganda.

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5. That the Area Divisions utilizing balloons as a means of propaganda delivery concentrate even more on their efforts to evaluate these operations so as to more accurately reflect the actual impact of the propaganda themes and to provide verifications of balloon delivery.

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(SENDER WILL CIRCLE CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP

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TO	INITIALS	DATE
1	<i>W</i>	25X1
2	<i>SK</i>	
3	<i>AC/TSS/RED 2/75</i>	<i>GH</i>
4	<i>Fals: Balloons, General</i>	
5	<i>No return to C/TSS/ED</i>	<i>WE</i>
FROM	INITIALS	DATE
1	<i>WE</i>	15 Feb
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☐ APPROVAL      ☐ INFORMATION      ☐ SIGNATURE  
☐ ACTION      ☐ DIRECT REPLY      ☐ RETURN  
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☐ CONCURRENCE      ☐ RECOMMENDATION      ☐ FILE

Remarks: *Hand carried by Olho - 15 Feb 57.*

*Very interesting, however, this paper seems to avoid any recommendations relating to ballooning. There are any reason for this?*

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